

When children are victims. . .

Sadly, children themselves are sometimes the victims of violence. A child who is being abused lives with constant fear and pain. And while the physical wounds may heal, the emotional scars can last a lifetime. If you know of a child who is being abused or if you suspect that someone may be abusing a child in your care, seek help immediately. Otherwise, that child may grow up to become a violent adult or may fall into a pattern of repeatedly being victimized.

For more information about reporting child abuse and neglect in Virginia, call:

Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline
1-800-552-7096

The influence of the media on children. . .

Media – especially television, but also videos, movies, comic books, music lyrics and computer games – have a strong influence on children. Research shows that violence in the media has the following effects:

- ◆ It gives children violent heroes to imitate.
- ◆ It increases mean-spirited, aggressive behavior.
- ◆ It shows children that violence is all right as a way to handle conflict.
- ◆ It makes it easy for children to ignore suffering and the bad effects of violence.
- ◆ It causes fear, mistrust and worry (sometimes including nightmares).
- ◆ It whets their appetite for viewing more violence, in more extreme forms.

And bear in mind that even when the “good guys” win, the effects are the same.

Reprinted by permission from "Violence Prevention for Families of Young Children," developed by the American Psychological Association's Act Against Violence initiative. More information can be found at www.ActAgainstViolence.org.



You Can Help Your Child Rise Above Violence. . .



**Virginia Coalition for
Child Abuse Prevention**

c/o Prevent Child Abuse Virginia
1-800-CHILDREN

You can help your child rise above violence. . .

Almost every day, newspaper headlines and TV broadcasts tell us that violence threatens our children.

If you are like most parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors and others who take care of young children, you worry most about the youngsters' safety. You don't want them to be exposed to violence, but in today's world, often that just isn't possible.

But you can do something about it! You can help protect a young child from getting involved with violence and you can increase that child's chances for a safe and productive future. The same skills that help children avoid violence also lead them to better relationships, a more fulfilling life and better careers.

Early learning is powerful. . .

Violent behavior is learned and often it is learned early in life. But just as children can learn to be violent, they also can learn to be kind-hearted. They can learn constructive ways to solve problems, deal with disagreements and handle anger. Children who learn these skills early in life actually are learning violence prevention – something that will be valuable for the rest of their lives. With these skills, children are far less likely to grow up to be violent or to be victims of violence.

Children need to feel safe and loved. . .

First and foremost, a child needs to feel safe at home. There is no surer way to start children on the right path in life than to provide consistent, reliable, loving care. How you relate to the children inside your home is perhaps the most powerful tool for protecting them from violence outside the home.



Children are people watchers. . .

Children learn how to behave by watching people around them. Your child learns by watching characters on television, in videos and in movies. And, above all, your child learns by watching you.

Think for a moment about how you react to difficult situations. How do you act toward your spouse? Your friends? Your neighbors? Other family members? You are teaching your child, by example, how to get along in the world. When you and others come together to solve your problems peacefully, your child learns how to deal with people in a positive way. But when you or someone close to your child is aggressive and destructive, the child learns to act the same way.



Just being exposed to violence is harmful. . .

When children, even very young children, see a violent act, they are deeply affected by it. This is especially true if the violence involves a family member or someone they know in the neighborhood.

What can you do to help? First, allow the children plenty of time to talk about violence they have seen at school, in the neighborhood or on TV. Encourage them to express their feelings about it.

Second, make sure your children get to see many more examples of people dealing with each other in a spirit of friendly cooperation rather than by threatening violence or hurting each other. The children will gradually realize that there are many ways to deal with people and resolve conflicts peacefully, and that violence is not the best way to get what they want.

